
5B

Information

Professional Services Committee

Bilingual Education Certification: Policy Considerations and Questions for Discussion

Executive Summary: This item provides information regarding teacher certification for bilingual education in California, recent policy shifts and service delivery model changes in bilingual education and its impact on teacher certification. It concludes with questions for discussion which would guide future policy work in this area.

Recommended Action: This is an information item and requires no action. Staff seeks direction to develop a formal plan for conducting further research in the area of bilingual certification.

Presenters: Susan Porter, Consultant, and Mark McLean, Assistant Consultant, Professional Services Division

Bilingual Education Certification: Policy Considerations and Recommendations

Introduction

The preparation of teachers to teach English learners has been an important aspect of the Commission's work since its inception. In the past forty years, the state of California has often been at the forefront of national trends and policies in the area of bilingual education and teacher certification. Presently, the Commission issues Bilingual Crosscultural Language and Academic Development (BCLAD) Certificates and BCLAD Emphasis credentials that authorize teaching in two languages. Test specifications for BCLAD have not been revalidated since 1994, and program standards for bilingual have not been updated since 1998. This item provides information regarding the history of bilingual education and bilingual teacher certification in California, as well as the findings of staff inquiries on recent policy shifts and service delivery model changes in bilingual education.

Background

Proposition 227, an initiative approved by California voters in June of 1998, required that English learners be taught in English unless their parents requested an alternative (bilingual) method of instruction. Since the passage of Proposition 227, structured English immersion classes have been the customary placement for language minority students instead of bilingual education classrooms. This law also places a one-year time limit (with certain exceptions) for a student to be in a self-contained classroom for English language development.

Under Proposition 227, English learners can only be enrolled in bilingual education programs if parents have signed a waiver. Since 1998, the percentage of English learners in bilingual education programs in California has dropped from about 28 percent to approximately 9 percent currently. The percentage of English learners enrolled in elementary bilingual education programs decreased from approximately 40 percent in 1998 to approximately 15 percent.

Within the current numbers of students enrolled in bilingual education classes, there are increasing numbers of students enrolled in two-way immersion (or dual language immersion) classes. In the two-way immersion model, language minority students are enrolled in classes with native English speakers. Instruction is conducted in both English and in the target language (or English learners' primary language). There are many variations to the two-way immersion model; many are distinguished by the ratio of time spent on instruction in English to instruction in the target language. In all two-way immersion classrooms, the ultimate goal is to develop biliteracy and bilingualism for both English learners and for native English speakers. Students are typically enrolled in two-way immersion programs from kindergarten or first grade through sixth grade. Some school

districts in California have extended their two-way immersion programs to include secondary grades as well. Data maintained by the Department of Education show that there are currently 155 schools that have two-way immersion programs in California.

History of Bilingual Teacher Certification in California

As a result of the enactment of the Chacon-Moscone Bilingual-Bicultural Act of 1976, (Education Code Section 44253.5), the Commission developed the Bilingual Certificate of Competence (BCC). The BCC authorized instruction for English language development (ELD), specially designed academic instruction in English (SDAIE), instruction for primary-language development, and content instruction in the primary language. An examination for the BCC was available for Spanish only and included bilingual teaching methodology, culture, and language components. Alternative assessments were available for eight other languages through Commission-approved assessor agencies. Although the mandate for bilingual classes under Bilingual-Bicultural Act ended in 1987, the Commission continued to issue BCC authorizations.

In 1992, with the redefinition of bilingual education, Assembly Bill 2987 (Campbell) established a new structure for bilingual teacher certification. Under this legislation, the Commission developed certification for instruction of English learners at two levels. The first level, called Crosscultural, Language and Academic Development (CLAD) certification, authorizes instruction for ELD and SDAIE. The second level, which replaced the BCC, is called Bilingual Crosscultural, Language and Academic Development (BCLAD) certification. This certification authorizes instruction in ELD and SDAIE as well as instruction for primary-language development, and content instruction in the primary language. Multiple routes are available to earn CLAD and BCLAD certification.

Individuals who already possess a valid California teaching credential (e.g., Multiple or Single Subjects, Education Specialist, etc.), may earn a CLAD or BCLAD Certificate by passing examinations. The (Bilingual) Crosscultural, Language and Academic Development (CLAD/BCLAD) Examinations consist of the following six examinations:

- Test 1: Language Structure and First- and Second-Language Development;
- Test 2: Methodology of Bilingual Instruction, English Language Development and Content Instruction;
- Test 3: Culture and Cultural Diversity;
- Test 4: Methodology for Primary-Language Instruction;
- Test 5: The Culture of Emphasis; and
- Test 6: The Language of Emphasis (listening, reading, speaking, and writing)

The BCLAD Examinations (Tests 4 through 6) were developed for nine languages (Armenian, Cantonese, Filipino, Hmong, Khmer, Korean, Mandarin, Spanish, and Vietnamese) BCLAD Examinations were first administered in 1995. Examinations for BCLAD authorizations in Punjabi were added in 1997. Additionally, an alternative assessment for Portuguese is available through the Merced County Office of Education. Teachers may earn the CLAD Certificate by passing Tests 1-3 or by completing 12 semester units of appropriate coursework. Candidates may earn the BCLAD Certificate by passing Tests 1-6 or by completing coursework for the CLAD and passing Tests 4-6.

CLAD or BCLAD certification can also be earned through Emphasis program routes. Emphasis programs have incorporated standards for teaching ELD and SDAIE in Multiple and Single Subject Teaching Credential programs. In addition, BCLAD Emphasis programs prepare candidates to teach English learners in one of the following languages: Chinese, Cantonese, Cambodian, Filipino, Hmong, Korean, Khmer, Laotian, Mandarin, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese. An experimental program for American Sign Language is also available through the University of California, San Diego.

CLAD Emphasis programs are being phased out. Pursuant to AB 1059 (Ducheny, 1999), all California Ryan Multiple and Single Subject Credential teacher preparation programs were required to satisfy a new standard established by the Commission for the preparation of teachers to serve English learners. These AB 1059 coursework requirements, which result in an authorization to teach English learners, are embedded in programs that have received SB 2042 approval from the Commission.

For credential holders who did not take AB 1059 approved coursework, or who have not yet earned an equivalent authorization to teach English learners, the CLAD Examination and course routes and the BCLAD Examination route are available. Pursuant to AB 1059, Commission staff are currently working with a testing contractor and an expert panel to review and update the current CLAD examination and program routes for experienced teachers who have not earned a prior authorization to teach English learners in English. The new examination and certification will be called the California Teacher of English Learners (CTEL) Examination/Certificate. The first administration of the examination is planned for the fall of 2005.

Commission Staff Activities to Address Bilingual Certification Issues

The current contract for the administration of the BCLAD Examination expires in fall 2006. Commission staff completed a series of research activities to gather background information and to prepare for an update of the bilingual certification process and the BCLAD Examination.

As part of this preparation work, staff aggregated (by language) the number of BCLAD certificates and Emphasis credentials issued since 1997. This data was compared with CDE data on the frequency of languages spoken by English learners in California classrooms since 1997-1998. This information revealed that there were extremely low numbers of test takers for many of the current BCLAD Examination language areas (See Appendix A).

Since the low incidence of test takers makes the examination routes somewhat impractical, several activities were undertaken to determine alternate routes for bilingual teacher certification that would still maintain high standards for bilingual certification. Such routes would have to account for newer models of bilingual instruction, more language options than current BCLAD exams provide, but still consider the current budgetary constraints. In the past year and a half, Commission staff has conferred with experts in the field in an attempt to address issues pertaining to bilingual certification.

Consideration was given to whether other states' existing examinations could meet California's needs in the area of bilingual certification. Test specifications were obtained for examinations from New York and Texas, two other states that have significant populations of English learners. Staff conducted an initial informal review of the specifications for these two tests to determine the degree of alignment with the knowledge and skill areas assessed on the BCLAD Examinations. Additionally, two California experts in the area of instruction of English learners conducted a similar independent review of the New York and Texas test specifications. The results of both informal reviews documented that the other states' exams and the BCLAD knowledge and skill areas were not aligned.

At a Bilingual Coordinators' Network (BCN) meeting held in March of 2004, a survey was conducted with twenty-five BCN members to gather input about bilingual certification and employment needs. This group of educators strongly supported program routes for new and experienced teachers to earn bilingual teacher certification.

Discussion Questions

- 1. Should the Commission explore alternatives to the current route to bilingual certification for already-credentialed teachers?** Currently, the BCLAD Examination offers the only route for credentialed teachers to earn bilingual certification. As shown in Appendix A, there have been extremely low numbers of candidates pursuing bilingual certification in California in recent years. In accordance with Proposition 227, bilingual education is no longer the default model for the instruction of English learners. This may be a factor in the low volumes of teachers pursuing bilingual certification through Emphasis and examination routes. Development of a new examination for each language would be very expensive and would result in prohibitively high testing fees for individual candidates. Education Code Section 44298 requires that candidate test fees be sufficient to cover the full cost of the examination system.
- 2. How shall the Commission maintain a structure for bilingual certification for those candidates who are in the process of earning a credential?** Standards for BCLAD Emphasis programs require institutions to incorporate competencies and assessments for bilingual teaching within Multiple/Single Subject Teaching Credential programs within the maximum number of units for the program (i.e., a "unit cap"). Institutions have found it challenging to develop high quality BCLAD Emphasis programs while maintaining the unit cap. The Commission approved standards for SB 2042 programs in September of 2001. There was intent to return to the development of standards for bilingual teacher preparation the following year; however, budgetary constraints prevented this activity. As a temporary measure institutions were given permission to continue offering BCLAD Emphasis programs until a new certification structure is in place.

- 3. Given the increased number of languages spoken by students in California classrooms, how can the Commission provide bilingual certification for more languages?** BCLAD Examinations are offered for 10 languages and Emphasis programs are offered for 12 languages. However, there are currently over 50 languages spoken by English learners in California classrooms. Statewide, the numbers of bilingual teachers needed for less frequently spoken languages remains relatively low, yet local and regional needs for teachers certified to teach in these low-incidence languages have increased significantly in the past ten years. Informal surveys and information gathered from the field have shown that there is much interest in creating pathways to bilingual certification that allow for inclusion of more low-incidence languages.

- 4. How should newer models of instruction be considered in the development of updated requirements for bilingual certification?** Experts have observed that two-way or dual immersion bilingual programs require teachers to have high oral and written language proficiency levels in English and in the target language. New models of instruction may need to be taken into consideration as the Commission proceeds with the development of updated routes to bilingual certification.

Staff seeks direction to develop a formal plan for conducting further research in the area of bilingual certification. This plan would include a systematic procedure for obtaining stakeholder input, and timelines for reporting back to the Commission. Subject to Commission approval, this process would address questions related to the issues outlined in this report.